

A

Sermon on the Pa

table of the Sower, ta-
ken out of the 13. of
Mathew.

Preached at London
M.G. Gifford, & published
at the request of sundrie
godly and well disposed
persons.



Imprinted at London for
Tobie Cooke, dwelling at
the Tigres head in Paules
Churchyard.

1582.

2000
1000

100
1000

1000

1000

Summa 2000 1000 1000

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

M. Iohn Hutton Esquier, George Gifford

*wisheth health and increase of
worship.*



It is more then halfe a
yere (right worshipfull)
since I handled this pa-
rable of the Sower, in a
Sermon at London, Be-
ing instantly vrged by a
friend which heard mee, to put it in
writing, althogh I was very vnwilling,
for sundrie considerations, yet I made
some promise if lesure shuld serue. Af-
terward when I wold very gladly haue
ben released at her hands whom I pro-
mised, I could by no meanes obtaine it.
I haue therfore at the last so nigh as I
could, set down in writing, that which
I then vttered in speking, I know that
I haue omitted some things in the par-
ticular applications, and exhortations
which I made: & also I haue added soe-
what which either then came not to
mind, or els time did not serue to han-
dle. I am bolde to present & dedicate
this my poore trauell vnto your wor-
ship, moued therto with diuers respects
as thinking my selfe in duetie bound,

A.ii.

not

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

not onely with this common & generall bond that ye are one which long time haue professed the glorious gospel of Iesus Christ: but with diuers more speciall, which are so wel knowne vnto you, that it wer needlesse for me to recite them: only thus much, seeing I was born & brought vp vnder you, my parents receiuing benefits daily frō you, I think I ought, when as I am not able to make any recompence, at least to shew some token of a grateful mind. But especially I am moued heerevnto, with consideration of the greatest blessing which all my kindred haue enioyed by you now so long, in prouiding & procuring their spiritual instruction. I pray you accept of my good will, & account of mee as one which praieth to the Lord for you, that he will multiplie & increase his good giftes still in you, to the glorie of his holy name, the benefit of his Church, & your endlesse comfort in Iesus Christ, Amen.

Yours for euer to command in the Lord.
George Gifford.

A Sermon vpon the Pa- rable of the Sower.

Math. 13.

1. **I**N that day Iesus went out of the house and sate by the Sea side.

2. And there was gathered vnto him a multitude, so that hee entered into a ship, and sate downe, and the whole multitude stood on the shoare.

3. And he spake many things vnto the by Parables, saieng: Behold a Sower went forth to sowe,

4. And as he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side: and the fowles came & ate them vp.

5. Other fell vpon stonie ground, where they had not much earth, and by & by they sprang vp, because they had not depth of earth.

6. And when the Sun rose they were parched, and because they had no root they withered.

7. Other fell among thornes, and the thornes grew vp and choked it.

8. Other fell into good grounde, and brought forth fruit, one seed an hundred fold, another sixty, another thirtie,

A.iii.

9 He

A Sermon on the

9 He that hath eares to heare, let him
heare.



Although the Iewes, at
such time as our saunt
our Christ came into y
wozid, had the word of
God among the: & had
also the temple & Syna-
gogues where they heard y same read &
expounded: yet their state was very mi-
serable, for Christ saith, they wer as shep
without a shepheard: because their tea-
chers, y Scribes & Pharesies, being choa-
ked with couetousnes, & puffed vp with
vaine glozy, were become stark naught,
corrupt in manners, and corrupting the
word with their fond gloses: their teach-
ing also was so cold, & with so litle pow-
er euen in y which they taught truly, y
the people had no great list to heare the.
But when Iohn Baptist the forerunner
of Christ, was raised vp to publish the
beginning of the Gospell, & to prepare y
way for the Lord: he like a sounding &
thrill Trumpet, with the power of his
word shooke their hearts, & rowled their
drowsines, so y fro his time y kingdome
of

Parable of the Sower.

of heuen suffered violence. When Christ
Jesus himselfe vttered his voice in prea-
ching, and his diuine power in working
wonders, ther appered such a wonderful
maiesty in his person, as did amaze the
hearers: wher vpon his fame was noised
far & neere, so y they came running out
of all quarters of y land by heaps, for to
see & heare him, they seemed to forget the-
selues & their state, in leauing al world-
ly affaires, as y husbandmē their plough,
y Artificers their craftes & sciences, fol-
lowing him into y wilderness with their
wiues & their children laggering at their
heelles, so great was their zeale. So that,
as before almost all did perish in y mi-
serable state they were in: now it seemed
y the greatest part, or at lest an innume-
rable multitude did with such care im-
brace y heauenly doctrine, as y they shuld
be most happy, & come to eternal life: but
this was otherwise, for our sadiour Christ
sheweth heere, y of this gret heap & rable
mēt of people, which wer so zealous & tra-
uelled so far to heare him, ther wer three
parts which did not profit by his doctrine
but cōtinued stil damned & forlorne crea-

A Sermon on the

tures, onely one parte of foure, are true schollers. And because we be ranke hypocrits, prone & redie to deceiue our selues, Christ Iesus laieth open the matter so plainly, & in so familiar a kinde of teaching, y^e vnles we wilfully blind our selues we cannot but see how the case standeth in euery of vs, each man in himselfe: for he taketh a similitude from a sower of corne, which going & casting his seed abroad, it lighteth vpon sundrie kinds of ground: some falleth by y^e way side, where the path is trampled & beaten smooth & hard, by mens feet, & is made like a pavement, & there it lieth aboue y^e ground altogether vncouered, the fowles come by and by and picke it vp,

Some falleth into stony ground or rocky, or as S. Luke saith vpon a rocke: where ther is a little thin crust of earth in y^e top, & some moisture in which the seed is a little couered: & because y^e earth which doth couer it is but shallowe, it springeth vp quickly & bryancheth, & is fresh & greene, & being so good, seemeth to be forward corne, & such as would yeld to the husbandman a plentiful haruest: but

Parable of the Sower.

but because the roote can not spreade it selfe deepe inough to sucke iuice out of the ground, for the nourishment of the blade, when the parching heate of the Sunne lighteth vpon it, then it is dyed vp, and scorched, and dyeth, and neuer bringeth forth fruite. Some other doth fall among thornes: there is depth of earth for the seed to growe, so that it springeth vp, and not onely a blade, but also a stalke, and commeth so farre as to haue the eare: but the thornes growe vp with it, ouershadowe and choake it, insomuch that the Corne in the eare, can not haue the benefit of y Sunne to make it ripe: therefore the fruite that it seeth to bring forth commeth to naught. Some other seeds fall into good ground, and grow vp, and bring forth seasonable fruite, one karnell an hundred, another sixtie, another thirtie. This is the Parable: Now for the meaning of it, we are not to seeke farre, neither to goe by coniectures, for Christ himselfe doeth expound and interpret euey part of it a little after in this Chapter: I need not but to lay open his Exposition.

A Sermon on the

The seede is the word of God: the sower of it is the Preacher and publysher of the same : for as the Sower doth fill his hand and so casteth it abroad vppon the ground, not setting it seede by seede, or choosing a place for euerie seede , but where it lighteth : euen so the Preacher doth cast forth the word among y people : and loke how the ground is into which it falleth, so doth it prosper : for your hearts are the ground vpon which it is cast : you that are the hearers and among whom the seede is sown, haue every one a heart which is one of these foure sorts of grounde, vpon which the seede falleth: & because the seede hath ben & is still daily sown among ye, I think this parcell of Scripture is verie fit and agreeable: euen as a touchstone for euery one to trie himselfe withall, whether he haue rightly embraced the Gospell, and to his saluation : for what a sottishnesse were this, when we haue so iust & plain a rule , not to measure our selues with it. But going on, on, nothing consider whether we be not one of those three euill sorts of ground, which receiue the seede,

Parable of the Sower.

seede, but bring forth no fruite, thinking
we be well if we professe the Gospell or
heare it, after any sort. Let vs goe for-
ward: those which receyue the seede by
the way side, are they which heare the
word and doe not vnderstand it, then
commeth the euill one, or as Saint Luke
saith, the Diuell, and taketh it awaye
from their heart. In these first kinde of
hearers, we haue to obserue, how that
their hearts being hard and smooth lyke
a path that is trampled and beaten with
mens fete y word hath no entrance, but
lieth aboute vncouered: for like as when
a man casteth an hardful of corne vpon
a very hard & smooth path, it is all one as
if it were cast vpon a pauement: so also
through y custome & deceitfulnes of sin-
ning, y diuel hath made y harts of these
vniuers to receiue the heuently seed of the
word: & looke how ye see Crows & other
foules folow the heeles of the Sower, to
picke vp & deuoure such karnells as doe
lie vncouered: in like manner doe the di-
uels come like greedy foules into the as-
semblies, wher y word of God is preach-
ed, to take it away from y hearts of the
people,

A Sermon on the

people, that it may not grow there. This peradventure will seeme straunge to some, that Satan shoulde haue anye entraunce into the Church among Gods people, especially when they be about the best and most holy exercises of hearing the word and of prayer. How straunge soeuer it may seeme, and how many soeuer haue bene, or be of that fond & doctish opinion, to thinke that the Diuell hath nothing to doe with them, or cometh not neere them, when they be about these holye things: we are to beleene Christ who telleth vs the contrary: & we are wisely to consider, that when we are nighest that which should do our soules good, then is this enimie readiest at hande, and doeth most busely bestirre him. If this were not vttered by our Saviour Christ himselte, we might wonder, and for mine owne parte I woulde not cease wondering to see manye hearers which carry away almost nothing which is to any purpose: let a man tell a long storie in a worldly matter, they haue wit inough to recite it in order againe, and to keepe it in remembraunce

Parable of the Sower.

a long time after : but let the Preacher
speake neuer so plaine, although they sit
and looke him in the face, yet if ye en-
quire of them so soone as they be out at
the Church dozes, ye shal easely perceiue
that (as the common sayeng is) it went
in at the one eare, and out at the other .
They will say peradventure; after this
manner, It was a good Sermon, I wold
we could follow it : he said very well :
he is a perfect ready man in the Pul-
pet. But aske, what doctrine did he han-
dle : Then are they at a pause, and set
at a dead list. They will make this an-
swere : we are not able to carry awaye
so much as other can, neuerthelesse we
hope that we be as good toward God, as
they that carry away most. They will
also confesse that the word of God is
good, and that we should be ruled by it.
Let vs therefore deereley beloued, (if we
desire not to be of the number of these)
marke well the subtill sleights, and pol-
licie of the Diuell, how he handeleth &
conueyeth the matter with this kinde of
people. There is no doubt of this, but
that if he can he will draue awaye the
minds

A Sermon on the

minde from comming to the Sermon ,
one pelting let or other must come in
the waye : if there be no worldye busi-
nesse to be done : then a paire of cardes
or tables or some honest recreation , it
should be now no good ciuilitie to parte
companye when friendes are met toge-
ther : this is the surest waye if it maye
be obtained : but what if he faile heere-
in : They come to the place where the
seede shall be sowne, sit downe, & minde
to heare : then the next way is to come
with them, and to attend at their elboe,
seeking how to depriue them of y word.
Now his best way is to bring them a-
sleepe because they were then as good bee
absent: or into a slumber, that they maye
heare onely a sound and a confused hum-
ming, without any perseuerance of the
things vttered: or els when they heare
any perfect sentence, or a few sentences,
they know not why they be vttered, be-
cause they hard not that which went be-
fore. Such as are not so drouisie headed,
being wakeful, he seeketh still to conuey
some thoughts into their minds, where
abouts they may be occupied, and they
vn

Parable of the Sower.

vnderstanding drawen away: the minde
of a man being light and inconstant, if
he can put in but one motion, it often-
times draweth with it so manye lynkes
as make vp a whole chaine, in y^e meane
time the Preacher goeth on, and he vn-
derstandeth not what was sayd, & so wheⁿ
his minde retourneth, he can haue no
sound knowledge of the things vttered,
but a confused opinion: into these by
thoughts, men are oftentimes brought,
even by occasion of some word or sen-
tence which they heard vttered, & are ca-
ried so far, that they cannot of long time
reouer their minde to bring it again to
the matter. Seeing this great danger, we
ought when we come to heare Gods
word taught, to make accout that we go
about a very hard worke, y^e we go to en-
couⁿter wth Satā hand to hand, who seeketh
then most busily to steale away our hart:
y^e he may make y^e word fruitles in vs, &
cause vs to sinne greuously against God.
Ther is no one man which maketh cō-
science of hearing y^e word rightly, which
setting these things together, y^e reuerence
we owe vnto it, y^e stedines of our mind,
which

A Sermon on the

which should be vpon it, and the care to keepe it, but will easily graunt that it is as hard and painful a trauell to do this, as for the man that worketh in the sorest bodely labour. Here is therefore a lesson for euery man to apply to himself when he is going to heare the word, to thinke, I am now going about a great worke, I shall be too weake if the Lorde God doe not mightelye assist me: for I am not to sit down there at ease, but to wrastle and struggle with the Diuell, & with all the corruptions of mine owne flesh, and hardnesse of my heart: that my minde maye be kept stedfast vpon the word, that I maye receiue it with all reuerence & feare, as the worde of the great and glorious God: not to iudge of it at mine owne pleasure, but to craue wisedome from the Lord: not to heare it and to let it go, but to keepe it as a most precious Jewell locked vp in my heart, that I may guide my selfe thereby. And we shall be a great deale the rather moued to this diligence, if we consider what a companion we carie about with vs, and what a guest we lodge withall

Parable of the Sower.

Withall, when we be such as heare the word, and doe not keepe it. For Christ telleth vs that it is the diuell which doeth this: which as a greedie fowle deuoureth the seede which was sown in our heart: if any make none account to haue him possessing their minde, & hardening their harts against the word: then let them continue in their sloth to heare with drouisie minds, to heare & not to vnderstand: to regard the holy word, but as the word of a man: to make little account to keepe it. But if he thinke it a most miserable thing to haue so filthy a beast, and so foule a spirit to lodge in his brest: if he thinke it to be a most vile slavery, to be vanquished & ouercome of so horrible an enemy, to be lead captiue & kept thralld vnder such a tyrant: then let him thinke also how miserable a thing it is to be such a kind of ground as doth receiue the seede by the way side: for undoubtedly howsoeuer men seeme to defy the diuell, and curse him as though he should not come nigh them, yet seeing it is no mortall man but the Lord Iesus Christ himselfe, who telleth vs here &

A Sermon on the

the diuell is not onely nigh, but in these kinde of hearers, euen hardening theyr heartes, & blinding their eies, we ought most constantly to beleue it. He that shall deeply weigh y^e estate of our church at this day, wil soone be brought to confesse, that there be many of this first sort of hearers, they shall perceiue it right well by this, that they are not able in any wise to iudge o^r put difference betwene sound and sincere preaching, and vaine prating: they know not when y^e preacher doth minister vnto the whole some foode, & when there is nothing but chaffe & winde: ye shal heare them highly commend some Sermon, as a matter worthy to be written in letters of gold, when as indeed it deserueth not so much as to be noted with a coale. I speak not of those silly wretches, which were neuer as yet acquainted with preaching, for it is no great maruell, though they be not able to discerne chalke from chesse: o^r being blind for to iudge of coulours, but to such as long time haue ben hearers, & yet neuer y^e wiser, because they are not able to iudge when sound and necessary con-

Parable of the Sower.

conclusions are drawne out of y^e word:
but is al one with them, whether y^e rea-
son that is made be good o^r bad, strong
o^r weake: yea further ye shall perceiue y^e
euen a little shew of a reason although
neuer so doltish, being against true god-
liness, doth more preuaile with them,
then a multitude of infallible p^{ro}ofes, al-
though they be neuer so sure: and that
which is so grosse & absurd that a childe
may laugh at, seemeth to them a verie
strong pillar to leane vnto. Ther needeth
no more when a man preacheth vnto
them, but a glorious shew of learning, a
sweet ringing voice, & matters so strange
& straungely handeled, that they may be
brought into a wonderment of y^e they
know not. And Satan hath many chap-
plaines fit fo^r this turne, to serue y^e vain
humo^r of such people, & to set fo^rth the
selues after a pompous so^rt: more seeking
their owne vaine glo^ry, then the glo^rye
of the Gospell, in the conuersion of the
people. The second kinde of ground are
they which receiue the seed vpon y^e hard
rock, where ther is some entrance, & the
word hath a shallow root in them, fo^r as

A Sermon on the

it were the top of their heart is soft after a sort, and there it is covered a litle, & it groweth up quickly, and springeth fresh, they seeme to be stout and excellent professors, they brag of great zeale: a man would take them to be sincere, & so they take themselves: but when the Sun ariseth, that is, the fire trial or parching heat of persecution, they stumble & fall away, and because the word had no deepe roote in them, it withereth and bringeth forth no fruit: these also are not profited by the word of grace, but are still cast awayes and damned creatures: in this kinde of ground, or in these hearers, if we note well, we shall see that which is straunge and wonderfull: when Christ sayth and testifieth of them, that they receiue the word with ioy: these be not blasphemers or persecutors of the word: they be not contemners which regarde not at all to heare it: they come not under a shew or pretence as to a thing which otherwise they haue no care nor feeling of, or which they delight not for to heare, but how? They receiue it with ioy, & take such pleasure therein, that re-
tur.

Parable of the Sower.

turning they can say, surely this was a very notable peere of worke & wel handled, I am glad that I heard it, it doth me euen as much good as my meate, I would go a mile to heare y like again. Is not this then meruailous and fearefull, that a man may goe thus far, & yet be a castaway, and a forlorne wretch? It is not a thing to be wondered at when the holy scriptures giue sentence against those traitorous villaines which set themselves against God, and tread down his laws: but when God uttereth this sharp sentence against this zealous kinde of men, if it cause vs not to wonder, yet it may make vs to tremble, when we see y a man may proceed thus far in religion & yet be damned. When we vnderstand y a man may be zealous, & redy to heare preaching, vnderstandeth, carrieth away, letteth it grow in his hart, hath some ioy in it, and yet neuer the better, abiding still vnder the curse. But there be some which will object against me & say, this is no good manner of teaching, for y vse of true teaching is to build vp and edifie y faith: but this seemeth to take away

A Sermon on the

the certeintie of faith from al, so that no man can tell whether he shall be saued: For by what meanes can a man make a better triall & pꝛoofe of his faith then this, that he giueth eare to Gods word, vnderstandeth it, carieth it alway, & ioyeth in it: If such a mā may be damned, who may not dispaire? I aunswere with S. Paule, 1. Cor. 10. 12. He that thinketh he standeth, let him take heed he do not fal. If y^e admonition were necessary to the Corinthians, it is necessary for vs al. One of the principall ends & vles of preaching, is to giue men warning y^e they doe not deceiue themselves with euery kind of faith or ioy in the word: but to looke for good & sound triall in themselves: which is not the way to bzing men to dispaire, but to bzing them to true godlinesse: to cause them to shake of securitie & loosenesse in the seruice of God: to beware least their heartes be hard still within: it causeth men to try theselues least they shuld be deceined by a vaine shadow of a dead & fruitlesse faith: for Christ saith, y^e these beleue (for so it is expꝛessed by S. Luke the 8. 13.) & ioy in the

Parable of the Sower.

the word, and yet are damned. Then let
vs come to the particular applieng of
this point: to see howe we are to deale
with our selues. Whē ye receiue y^e word
take hēde y^e ye giue it depth of earth
inough, loke that your heart be not soft
and pliable inough a little aboue, and a
hard rocke of stone within, but see y^e it
be digged and softened to the bottonic,
y^e the word may take root deepe inough.
Alas, what a miserable thing is it, when
Christ hath giuen vs warning hēre so
plainly, for a man to be a zealous Gos-
peller, not onelye willing to heare, but
hath an earnest desire, and trauelketh to
heare, taketh pleasure & delight when he
heareth, yet neuertheles, because he ta-
keth no hēd therto, his heart within is
so stony, y^e he heareth but to his further
increse of damnation. Many think it go-
eth well with thē, when as they receiue
this testimonie frō men: he is a sound
Protestant, he fauoureth & delighteth in
y^e truth, these indeed be great tokens of y^e
feare of god, but yet we are not to rest in
thē: our chiefe dealing is betwēne God
& our heart: & that in this t̄ing whether

A Sermon on the

our heart be not hard and rockie. Those are a thousand times happie, which feele melting hearts & soft affections, so that Gods word doth pearse into them, and causeth them to tremble at the maiesty & power of the same: their tender heart doth sigh & mourne for their iniquitie. As on y^e cōtrary part, they which make no conscience of sinne, but are hardened in their affections, although they seeme to be in good case, yet are they cursed and miserable. Let enery man therefore that goeth from the Sermon, carry this with him: I heare by Christes owne words y^e there is a stonie ground where the seede falleth: where it groweth but not deepinough, it springeth vp but doth not bring forth fruite: this is a wofull case, if I should be in y^e number of these, for then all my labour is lost, which I bestow in frequenting Sermons, yea, it were much better y^e I had neuer heard: I feele that I ioy in it, I would not for any thing but I had heard it: but Christ saith that the reprobate, some of them do heare the word with ioy, so that if I looke not narrowly to mine owne hart,

Parable of the Sower.

I may for all this be damned : therfore
I must not satisfie my selfe with this,
but see that I couer the worde deepe
enough, that my heart be softened in such
sort, that I feele the roote goeth deepe ,
yea, so deepe, that it can neuer bee rooted
out : And therfore let him continually
crie vnto God and say : O Lord make
softte my harde and stonie heart : let it
be a melting heart, that thy holy worde
may growe in it for euer. I woulde so
O Lord, this doctrine of our Saviour
Christ, might make euerye of vs to
tremble and shake (as indeede if it were
well weighed, it is so fearfull, that it
might cause the haire of our heades to
stand vp) for then would we not so loose-
ly and securely walke in the hardnes of
our hearts : there would not be so ma-
nye backsliders in time of persecution :
there would not be so many braue bo-
asters and praters of Religion, who are
ready to pull in their horns, and to hide
their heades, so soon as there is any
feare of danger, or likelihood of per-
secution: neither would men beare them-
selues in hand that they be idly profes-

A Sermon on the

so2s, when they haue but a little tasted of the word, and are no moze but emptie barrells, which giue a great sounde. Here then we be set a wo2k with great toyle, to haue this same harde stonye ground made soft, and fit to receiue this heauenlye sēde. And he which is not carefull in this poynt, to take paines, ye shall see him ware so hard, that euen as a continuall rayne dropping vppon a Rocke of stone maketh it neuer the softer, so nothing can make his heart to relent. This may teach vs then to cease maruelling, when we see so many which willingly giue themselues to be taught, and haue still little remorse of sinne. The Lord for his mercie sake make vs wise and sharpe sighted to iudge of our selues: not to be leade on forwarde in a carnall profession, but to giue credite to our heauenlye teacher, who hath here opened his holy mouth to instruct vs so plainlye, and before hande to warne vs of the great daunger: that we may stir vp our selues, and be quickened in our dull spirits, with all humble submission, and bowing downe our neckes, to receive

Parable of the Sower.

reliue the doctrine of our Lorde, and to open our heartes in such sorte that hee may digge in them, and thrust in his spade to the bottome. For otherwise, it cannot goe well with vs. If this wer practised among vs, we shoulde not haue so many olde rustie Protestants: which if a man talk with them from morning to night, they are able to continue speach in reciting stozies and places of Scripture, and will vtter matter agaynst the doctrine of the Pope: but let a man vze them with the doctrine of regeneration, and stande vpon the necessitie of sincere repentance, showing them that they must be trulye humbled vnder the burthen of theyr sinnes, that they must mortifie and subdue their carnall lusts: this is to hard a cruss for their old teeth. This matter doth marre all: this doeth robbe them of their glorie: and therefore they cannot willynglye abide to heare of it. Let vs come now to the third kinde of ground, which receyueth the seed among the thorns: heere is depth inough of earth: so y as the second sort of hearers seemed to go far beyond the first,

so

A Sermon on the

so these seeme to goe farre beyond them,
and to come nigher to eternall life, for
heere the word doth grow and hath roote
so deepe, that it springeth forth so farre,
that Christ saith it groweth vp, and the
thornes grow vp with it, the stalk doth
shoute forth the eare, and lacketh but ri-
ping. For this may be proued by Saint
Luke, who saith that they be not (Te-
lesphorountes) that is, such as beare
ripe and timely fruite: for these profes-
sors doe many good workes, and seeme
to bring forth the fruites of the Gospell:
and that in such wise that men cannot
alwayes discern them, but thinke their
deedes to be notable: but Christ Jesus
doth shew that their works before God,
(who onely cannot be deceyued) are as
Cozne which lacketh riping, which bee-
ing overshadowed with bushes, wither-
eth in the eare and commeth to naught:
this is a dangerous case if we looke
not to it: What a man may heare the
Gospell preached, carrie it away, be mo-
ued thereby to doe many good workes:
and yet be damned. He is a thousande
folde madde therefore, which doeth not
looke

Parable of the Sower.

looke to himselfe in this point : to trye
what soundnesse there is in the fruits of
his faith, and how sincerely he doth im-
brace Gods word . As before I sayde,
that some would object and say, this wil
destroy the faith, so am I sure that here
it will be said much more : because this
seemeth to take away the surest tryal of
faith : if a man may not by and by saye,
I haue good woꝝkes, therefore I haue
the true and lyuely faith : I aunswere,
that whosoever hath any good woꝝke in
him, the same hath the true faith, which
hath brought forth that good woꝝke, be-
cause it is impossible without faith to do
any good thing, or to haue any good mo-
tion or intent : but withall I saye, that
it is one thing to seeme good before men,
and another thing for to be good indeede
before God. In outward appearaunce,
there is little difference betwene the
good deeds of them which feare God sin-
cerely, and the vntimely fruite of world-
lyngs: but God whose eye doth not looke
vpon the outward shew, but the inward
affection, seeth which procédeth of faith,
and which doth procéde of vaine glorie,

A Sermon on the

or some other sinister respect, & putteth
as great difference betwene them, as he
did betwene the sacrifices of Cayn & A-
bel. We must take heed then, y^e the fruits
of our faith be ripe & timely, otherwise
they be good but in shew. We must come
then to see first what these thornes are: in
S. Mathew they are called, the cares of
this world & the deceitfulness of riches: in
Saint Luke: the cares of riches, & plea-
sures of this lyfe. And in very deed, these
thornes doe grow together. For were it
not for the pleasures of this life, there
would be no cares of riches: he which
doth seeke greedely for wealth, it is ey-
ther because he woulde be able to haue
wherewithall to fill the lusts of y^e flesh,
and to pamper his body delicately: or els
to set forth himselfe in pride, & to clyme
ambitiously to honour. For so long as a
man doth take pleasure in any of these,
so long he is couetous & raketh together
so much, that as the common sayeng is,
he raketh vp the Diuell and all. What
must we doe then? Our heartes are as a
ground that is ranke, & bringeth forth
many weeds: we are set a work as God
spea-

Parable of the Sower.

Speaketh by his Prophet Jeremy. chap.
4.4. Plow vp your fallow, & sow not a-
mong y^e thorns: we must put all diligēce
& care y^e our hearts may be rid of such
noisome weeds as will choke y^e word of
God, & make that it shal not bring forth
fruit in vs. So long as we suffer any of
these in vs, either to loue daintie & dely-
cate feeding of our flesh, and to fill our
selues with y^e lusts thereof, or to be gal-
lant in y^e eyes of men, & hauntely to lift vp
our selues in our vainglorious mindes, &
for y^e maintenance of these delights bend
our care to y^e world: so long shall we be
vnprofitable scholars in y^e school of Christ.
Alas poore men which wold faine come
to God, & yet are glewed to y^e world, they
offer one hand to Christ, & the other to y^e
diuel: they can talke of y^e spirit, & yet are
led by y^e flesh: y^e gospel is in their mouth,
& couetousnesse lodgeth in their hearts:
their workes glister & are grēne before
men, and are withered before God: they
seeme to be faithfull & are faithles, to be
heires of glory, & yet are the children of
cōfusiō. Ther are great plētie of these he-
rers, & specialy in such places, wher ther
is

A Sermon on the

is wealth and honours: how many fall
away choked with the world? And yet
we are not afraid of our selues to take
heede that we stand fast. A great mercie
of God it is that we haue not onely the
doctrine layed before vs, but also fearfull
examples: so that we may buy our wit
with other mens cost. For when we see
the world with delights and pleasures,
with couetousnesse and ambition, to car-
rie away those which professe the Gos-
pell, is not our owne matter in hande,
are not we made of the same mettall
they are, doth not the world assault vs as
it doth them? Yes, and we shalbe ouer-
come also, if the Lorde haue not mercie
vpon vs. The hardnesse of this worke,
ought not to discourage or make vs slack,
but hearing what Christ saith, whome
we ought to beleue, the more harde, the
more we are to stirre vp our selues, un-
lesse we make small reckoning of the
saluation of our soules. He y shall yeld
and giue ouer the digging vp of these
thornes, because he perceiueeth they grow
deepe in his heart, and spring as fast as
he can cut them: is not worthy to enter
into

Parable of the Sower.

into life: he which will not continually till and weede this ground, may well haue the Gospell in some sorte soe to grow in him, but not to saue him. Dearely beloued we must be surely perswaded of this, that as there be many godly men, so haue they attained it with great labour and toyle, yea, they are still set a worke and cannot come to an end, because these thornes cannot be vtterlye rooted out.

Those are greatly ouerscene which thinke it to be an easie thing to professe Christ vnto saluation: & make no further account but to be Gospellers, at ease: if they can vanquish in disputation, to thinke they haue won the field: no, no, they haue a heart which is harde to ouercome: they haue thornes which wil not easily be destroyed: heere lieth y^e victory and getting of the spurs: this man shall be crowned because he hath willingly giuen vp himselfe to the power of Gods grace to purge his heart, and to make room for the holy worde, that it may grow there alone, and not be ouershadowed and choaked.

A Sermon on the

How let vs marke well that which is
sayde heere, both of the stonie and also
of the thornie ground, how farre they
procéede in professing Christ, and imbra-
cing his Gospell: and we shall plainly
see, how greatly those carnal Gospellers
which will not haue faith to be tried
by the fruits, are deceiued: Faith, faith,
(say they) is that which doth iustifie, it
is true indeede, but not a fruitlesse faith:
whosoever beleueth shall be saued: it is
euen so, but not after euery kinde of be-
liefe: for then why should not these two
sorts of herers be saued, it is meruailous
when the Scripture is so euident, & our
saniour Christ speaketh so plainly, that
this grosse & doltish error shoulde pos-
sesse the minds of so many. But indeed
it is a sweet doctrine, when a man may
let loose the raines to all the lusts of the
flesh, at the least thus farre, not to bere
& torment himselfe in subduing them, &
yet by faith to be saued. When heauen
& hell meeete together, and God and the
diuel be reconciled, then shall these fleshy
Epicures, and vaine proude men
come to their happinesse. When Christ
shall

Parable of the Sower.

shall denie that which he hath here
uttered, then shall these be true belie-
uers.

Let men therfore take heede that they
be not deceiued, nor made slacke in look-
ing to the fruits of their faith & mortifi-
cation of vaine fleshly lusts, through &
prophane prattling of such worldly belly
Gods: beleeue not them, but beleeue Je-
sus Christ, who telleth you that it is not
enough to heare the word, & to receiue it
with ioy, & to let it grow in vs, vnlesse
it bring forth reasonable and timely
fruit in vs.

Againe, let vs marke how strong and
invincible an Argument may be gather-
ed out of this text against all contem-
ners and despisers of the word, such as
care not for hearing: these three sorts of
hearers, are before the, & nearer to chri-
stianitie then they, and yet come short:
therefore it must needs follow, that such
ignorant Atheists, as neither know, nor
desire to knowe any thing aboue this
world, are very far from God, although
they would seeme with their mouth &
lips to draw nere vnto him. For if this

A Sermon on the

matter were well obserued, men would not regard nor haue those men in estimation to be good & honest, who are very dogs or swine, not regarding y^e p^{re}cious pearle of the Gospel, but ready to bark & bite at those which bring it. Let a man inquire thus, not of a few, but of y^e greatest part of men, how late ye to such a man, what thinke ye of him: he is (saye they) a verie good man, a good natured man, a gentle person, true to his friend, sure of his word, & doth keepe as good an house as anye man of his calling in all this shire. But how is he affected vnto Gods word: is he zealous in religio: pray surely, I did neuer heare y^e he did deale y^e way, he is a very quiet man, no medler at al. A notable honest man, as deuout in y^e lawes of God as the horse which he rideth vpon, as careful to haue gods glorie aduanced, as the swine in the stile, a great deale behinde these vnprofitable hearers, which are callwaies: & yet forsooth being very brut beasts be they? God (in y^e state they be in, yet vntill y^e Lord call them to bee zealous of his glorie) they must be reputed for the best men.

Dur

Parable of the Sower.

Our fieldes are full of such Cattell as these, and if the Lord do not put to his helping hand, our case is very miserable. If any of those which were so zealous to heare, that they woulde to their hinderance in worldly matters leaue off their businesse, and follow preaching, as these which flocked to heare Christ, wer yet nevertheless relected, because they did not so sincerely as they should: what shal we say of those which wil not step out at their doores, euen when they haue nothing to do, vnales it be to sit at cards or tables. If such a man maye be damned, as is moued with some delight, when he heareth the worde preached: What shal we iudge of those wooden blockes and sottish men, who feele no more ioye in it then a poss, when it is vttered vnto them: If ther be some go to destruction, which conforme themselves and haue a shew of fruite by the worde: wher shal those wretches appeare, whom the holy word of God cannot moue one whit, to reforme their disordered & beastly behauiours. I neede not stande to inueigh out of this place against those

C.iiij. hel.

A Sermon on the

helhounds, which dare open their mouths to reproch and slander the setting forth of the Gospell. The Lord diminish the number of them.

The last kind of ground, are the good hearers, which do not onely receiue the seede, but also bring forth the fruits thereof, Although not euery one a lyke or in the same measure, for some bring forth an hundred fold, some sixtie fold, some thirtie fold, according to the measure of Gods graces in them.

Although here be great odds in bringing forth the fruits, yet they be all accepted and accounted for good ground, true Christians, and sincere professors of godlinesse: now as we be taught here that it is required of all to be doers, as S. James saith, and not hearers only cha. 1. ver. 22. so are we also taught, not to despise or rashly to condemne those, which do not bring forth so great a measure of fruit as others do: True it is, as Christ saith, herein is my father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruite. Iohn. 15. 8. But it is also as true which he saith in the second verse of the same chapter, Every

Parable of the Sower.

very bzaunch that bzingeth forth fruite,
he purgeth, that it may bzing forth more
fruite. Then to bzing forth most, is most
of all to be desired, that God maye haue
the greatest glory: to bzing forth the
least is not to be contemned, because
the Lord in time doth purge the, & make
them more fruitfull. I need not to stand
heere for to handle manye things, or to
make large exposition, the matter is ex-
ceeding plaine, ther is no more but this,
that all our care in hearing & professing
the Gospell, be to receiue it into good
ground, and to bzing forth the fruites
thereof. What should I stand to rip vp
the shamefull abuse in the contrary, to
vtter how manie euill fruits ther be in
many which are Gospellers. This shuld
be but as it were to light a candle in the
cleere Sun shine, for all men do see them.
I do not speake this, as though it should
not be good to crie out against them: but
because the former things which I haue
now vttered, doe fully disclose them. And
therefore I will heere ende, desiring the
Lord to write these things in our harts,
which we haue heard with our outward
E.iiij. eares,

A Sermon on the

earre; and to make vs good ground, to re-
ceiue the heauenly seede, & to bring forth
fruites of the same, that glorifying him
in this world, we may be glorified
of him in the world, to come,
through Iesus Christ
our Lorde.
Amen.

FINIS.



